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UNCLAS NAIROBI 000455

SIPDIS

STATE FOR OES/STC EILEEN KANE
ADDIS ABABA FOR REO KIRSTEN BAUMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [SENV](#) [TSPL](#) [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [ENRG](#) [ECON](#) [AMGT](#) [APER](#) [EPA](#) [KE](#)
SUBJECT: Embassy Science Fellows Program 2009 (Kenya)

REF: A. SECSTATE 10843, B. 07 Nairobi 4616

Subject/General Information

¶1. Embassy Nairobi requests a Science Fellow from USGS, NOAA, USDA, or other appropriate agency to provide technical assistance to Kenya's Ministry for the Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands in land use planning for Kenya's Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASALs). Timing for the Fellowship is flexible, but ideally the Fellow would arrive in Kenya before the end of calendar year 2009 and spend enough time with Ministry officials to make a significant contribution to the development of a new the land use plan. We understand some of the previous work done by USGS scientists Chris Funk, Jim Verdin, and Michael Dettinger would make any of them particularly well-suited for this project. No foreign language or security clearance is required, but a medical clearance would be necessary.

Proposal Description

¶2. Kenya's Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASALs) represent over 80 percent of the country's land mass, but have been systematically neglected in terms of development since Kenya's days as a British colony. The economy in these areas has always relied on the livestock sector, but the sector's continued viability relies on sustaining ecologically sensitive pastoralist practices.

¶3. Security, development, and political interests pressure pastoralist groups to become sedentary residents of towns, and the Government of Kenya must figure out how to help maintain the balance between helping ASAL inhabitants benefit from development while preserving an environment conducive to pastoralism.

¶4. Climate change will make this task more difficult. Existing scientific literature predicts that Africa -- and ASALs in particular -- will be strongly affected by climate change. Longer, more frequent droughts and vegetation changes will make the pastoralist lifestyle even more challenging. Land use planning is made more complex since it must address drought mitigation, tourism as a source of national revenue, and the needs of pastoral communities.

¶5. Kenya's Ministry for the Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands (the Ministry) was established in 2008 to address the development needs of Kenyans living in the ASALs, and the ministry has taken on a diverse portfolio to help them. It is not easy. In addition to the harsh

living environment, Kenya's ASALs are prone to violent conflict, which is often aggravated by poorly conceived development agendas that favor sedentarization over pastoralism.

¶6. The Ministry will soon begin the process of developing a land use management plan to balance the interests of pastoralists and sedentary populations as well as promote sustainable development. While many of the issues to be grappled with are political and cultural, others are technical and will depend on how Kenya's ASALs are likely to change over time under the effects of climate change. Growing interest in Northern Kenya by investors is likely to increase pressure on the natural resource base and therefore make even more important the need for scientifically sound land use planning, as well as the institutions which will ensure their application. New attention from investors, while welcome, may be a double-edged sword.

¶7. The Ministry would benefit tremendously from the presence of a Science Fellow to act as a technical advisor on the development of the land use plan, particularly with regard to the effect of climate change on Kenya's ASALs. Specifically, the Fellow would develop or utilize a downscaled climate change model to predict how climate change will affect Kenya's ASALs. From the downscaled model, the Fellow would provide advice and guidance on likely water and vegetative changes so that the Ministry could make informed decisions on land use. The ultimate objective of the land use plan is to help mobile pastoralism remain a viable livelihood and ensure sustainable development of sedentary populations, while maintaining the wildlife tourism industry.

Administrative Support

¶8. The U.S. Mission will provide housing, travel funds, and administrative support for the Fellow's tenure in Kenya, including office and computer support if necessary, although the Ministry has offered to provide a work space and computer support. The Fellow's work would primarily be in Nairobi working with Ministry staff, but some in-country travel will likely be necessary. Depending on the timing of the Fellow's arrival, the Mission will either identify temporarily vacant furnished housing within the existing Mission housing pool or will alternately identify suitable temporary residence in a local RSO-approved hotel. Post Management and RSO support the deployment of a Science Fellow.

Contact Information

¶9. Political Officer Rachael Doherty will be at Post until August 2010 and will be primary point of contact. She can be reached at 011 254 (0)20 363 6188. Her e-mail address is DohertyRT@state.gov. Post's ESTH officer, George Aldridge, is due to rotate in Summer Cycle 2009. He and his successor, EFM Carrie Denver, will act as backup points of contact. Mr. Aldridge can be reached at 011 254 (0)20 363 6048. His e-mail address is AldridgeGW@state.gov. USAID/Kenya will provide additional support and guidance through the direction of Supervisory Program Officer Mark Meassick.
RANNEBERGER